

Islam, Redemption, and the Deity of Christ

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**If only there were someone to arbitrate between us,
to lay his hand upon us both,**
Job 9:33 (NIV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** ...
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
John 1:1,14

In the Old Testament Job's heart pleaded for someone to stand between God and him (Job 9:33). He felt a longing for someone who could feel his despair and hopelessness and also appear before God to intercede for him. When he looked around, he saw no one who was perfectly sinless and qualified to mediate between himself and God, who is the Holy and Righteous One. The answer to Job's dilemma did not appear in human history until the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Lord Jesus Christ is the vital link between God and the sinner, because His deity reaches God and His humanity reaches the human race. The Deity of Christ bridges the gap between guilty sinners and God's infinite justice and uncompromising holiness. Without the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, there can be no possibility of eternal salvation for you or me.**

Sinners

All human beings have sinned, and those who have committed sins must be judged and punished according to the infinite justice of the Holy and All-Mighty One. Both the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament present the fact that we all have sinned. The Qur'an also affirms that sinners will be punished.

King David (*Dawud*) wrote, "**All** have turned aside." He applied this statement to himself as well as to everyone else. In fact, we read that King David committed the evil act of adultery (2 Samuel 11:4). Even for such an important personage as King David, God is faithful to the truth, and He does not hide the truth or compromise His holiness for anyone.

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. **All have turned aside**, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Psalms 14:2-3 (NIV)

The Prophet Isaiah wrote that "we **all**, like sheep, have gone astray," and there is no exception to the little word, **all**.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

Although many other scriptures could be referenced, we will quote a final one from the New Testament that supports the Old Testament's view of the sinfulness of mankind. It says,

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (NIV)

The Greek word for sin (*hamartia*, *αμαρτια*) means to miss the target. Now it is acknowledged that some miss the target more than others do, so it is true that humans do not all sin to the same degree. However, they **all** miss the mark of the glory of God. As the Lord Jesus Christ said, the standard of perfection is the very perfection of God Himself.

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48 (NIV)

Prophets were sinners

The Bible gives us a faithful account of the sins of the Old and New Testament prophets. As much as we find it distasteful, God is the True One, so He presents a true record of their deeds, both the good and the evil. God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). Thus, God cannot present a fanciful account of the lives of the prophets. Therefore, when we read the Holy Scriptures, we see prophets were sinners who needed God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness like everyone else.

Most modern Muslims are unbelievers (*kafirs*) when it comes to the testimony of the Qur'an regarding the sins of the prophets. They attempt to soften the force of the Qur'an and to pass off the sins of the prophets as instances of forgetfulness, unwitting mistakes, simple ignorance, or examples of pious humility.

However, the Qur'an notes that Adam and Eve disobeyed the clear command of God who told them neither to eat the fruit of the tree nor to heed the words of Satan. They knowingly disobeyed both of God's commands; and, if God had not forgiven them, they knew they would have been lost and eternally doomed. When they said, "We have wronged ourselves," they were not innocent nor were they speaking with feigned

humility nor was it a plea of ignorance. They knew without a doubt they had offended and disobeyed the two direct commands of God, the All-Mighty.

... And their Lord called them, saying: **Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you: Lo! Satan is an open enemy to you? They said: Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves.** If thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, surely we are of the lost". Sura al-Araf 7:22-23. (Pickthal's translation)

The Qur'an states that the Prophet Abraham (*Ibrahim*) hoped that his sin would be forgiven on the Day of Judgment.

"And **Who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgment**".
Sura Ash-Shu'ara 26:82

The Prophet Moses (*Musa*) needed forgiveness.

He said: My Lord! **Lo! I have wronged my soul, so forgive me.** Sura Al-Qasas 28:16

And the Prophet Jonah (*Yunus*) was "blameworthy" for his rebellious deeds.

And the fish swallowed him while **he was blameworthy.** Sura As-Saffat 37:142

So, the Qur'an contradicts the Muslim's idea that the prophets were sinless.

Muhammad was a sinner

Although many modern Muslims claim that Muhammad was sinless, the Qur'an and the ancient hadith collections present a more realistic picture. The ancient Islamic sources prove that Muhammad was a sinner, and that he was instructed to ask for the forgiveness of his sins past and future. The Arabic word for sin is a word that is used to describe the evil deeds of wicked people in the Qur'an. So, it is more than a word meaning to make a mistake, as so many Muslims claim when they seek to escape the force of these verses in the Qur'an. The Qur'an uses the term 'offence' (ذنب) for very serious deeds of wickedness, some of which are among 'heinous' or 'mortal' (كبائر) sins.

Then have patience (O Muhammad). Lo! the promise of God is true. And **ask forgiveness of thy sin**, and hymn the praise of thy Lord at fall of night and in the early hours. Sura al-Ghafir 40:55

That **Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come**, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path, Sura al-Fath 48:2

So know (O Muhammad) that there is no Allah save Allah, and **ask forgiveness for thy sin** and for believing men and believing women. Allah knoweth (both) your place of turmoil and your place of rest. Sura Muhammad 47:19

In addition to the Qur'an, the sahih hadiths affirm that Muhammad was a sinner. The most respected hadiths, Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, state that Muhammad beseeched Allah for the forgiveness of his sins in the past as well as those that he would commit in the future. He even mentioned his sins that he did in secret.

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: The Prophet used to invoke Allah at night, saying, "O Allah: All the Praises are for You: You are the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth. All the Praises are for You; You are the Maintainer of the Heaven and the Earth and whatever is in them. All the Praises are for You; You are the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. Your Word is the Truth, and Your Promise is the Truth, and the Meeting with You is the Truth, and Paradise is the Truth, and the (Hell) Fire is the Truth, and the Hour is the Truth. O Allah! I surrender myself to You, and I believe in You and I depend upon You, and I repent to You and with You (Your evidences) I stand against my opponents, and to you I leave the judgment (for those who refuse my message). **O Allah! Forgive me my sins that I did in the past or will do in the future, and also the sins I did in secret or in public.** You are my only God (Whom I worship) and there is no other God for me (i.e. I worship none but You)." [Sahih al-Bukhari Volume 9, Book 93, Number 482](#)¹

Narrated Shaddad bin 'Aus: The Prophet said, "The most superior way of asking for forgiveness from Allah is: 'Allahumma anta Rabbi la ilaha illa anta. Khalaqtani wa ana 'abduka, wa ana 'ala 'ahdika wa Wa'dika mastata'tu abu'u Laka bi ni 'matika wa abu'u Laka bidhanbi; faghfirli fa'innahu la yaghfiru-dh-dhunuba ill a ant a. A'uidhu bika min sharri ma sana'tu.'"² If somebody recites this invocation during the night, and if he should die then, he will go to Paradise (or he will be from the people of Paradise). And if he recites it in the morning, and if he should die on the same day, he will have the same fate." [Sahih al-Bukhari Volume 8, Book 75, Number 335](#)³ (The transliterated Arabic text is translated in endnote 2.)

'A'isha reported: The Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) entered my house when a Jewess was with me and she was saying: Do you know that you would be put to trial in the grave? The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) trembled (on hearing this) and said: It is the Jews only who would-be put to trial. 'A'isha said: We passed some nights and then the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Do you know that it has been revealed to me:" You would be put to trial in the grave"? **'A'isha said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) seeking refuge from the torment of the grave after this.** [Sahih Muslim Book 004, Number 1212](#)⁴

In his *Sirat Rasul Allah*,⁵ Ibn Ishaq presented a number of Muhammad's sins, such as, banditry, murder, and sexual misconduct. So, it is no wonder that Muhammad was afflicted with a guilty conscience. However, rather than providing additional proof that human beings are sinners and that Muhammad was a sinner too, we proceed with our topic at hand.

The Lord Jesus Christ was sinless

The Apostles Peter, John, and Paul affirmed that the Savior was sinless, each according to their own life experience. The Apostle Peter is better known for his *actions*, so he wrote that the Lord Jesus Christ **did no sin**. By contrast, the Apostle John was the most *contemplative and appreciative of the inner meditative life*, so he wrote that Christ **had no sin** within Him. Finally, the Apostle Paul was *educated and the most intellectual* of the Apostles. He said that the Lord Jesus Christ **knew no sin**.

Peter - **He committed no sin**, and no deceit was found in his mouth. 1 Peter 2:22 (NIV)

John - But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And **in him is no sin**. 1 John 3:5 (NIV)

Paul - For he hath made him to be sin for us, **who knew no sin**; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

According to the Qur'an, Jesus was pure and sinless. Yusuf Ali's translation of Sura Maryam 19:19 is rendered "holy son" for Jesus, while others translate the Arabic text as "faultless son" (Pickthal), "pure son" (Shakir), "righteous son" (al-Hilali & Khan), "good son" (Ahmed Ali), "holy son" (Sale), "pure boy" (Palmer), "holy son" (Rodwell), and "a boy most pure" (Arberry).

He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son. Maryam 19:19 (Yusuf Ali's translation)

In contrast to Muhammad, the Qur'an states that the Lord Jesus Christ was pure, holy, good, and righteous. The Qur'an never indicates that Jesus was instructed to ask for the forgiveness of His sins.

God's Holiness & Justice

Just as the Holy Scriptures teach us that human beings are sinners, it also teaches us that God is the perfection of Holiness and Justice. In other words, God never compromises His justice to show mercy. The person who sins must die and face the awful judgment of God at the Last Day.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, Hebrews 9:27 (NIV)

Because each one of us is a sinner, we must eventually die and face the judgment of God for our sins. Are you ready to give an account of your sins before the All-Knowing One? Do you entertain the false idea that God will excuse your sins because you did some good deeds during your life? This is a foolish, sinful, and pagan notion! To see how wrong idea this is, let's suppose a person works hard and is good to his children. Of course, these

are good and praiseworthy deeds in themselves. They are deeds that God has commanded and that He expects us to do.

"Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Luke 17:9-10 (NKJ)

However, let's suppose this very person robs a bank. Do you think that a human judge will forgive him because he is a hard worker and is a good parent too? Of course, not! A faithful and true judge must judge the evil of the bank robbery. His good deeds do not justify his evil deeds! An honest and true judge must condemn and punish his evil deeds. Likewise, God's justice and holiness requires that all the sins of a sinner must be punished, and the wages of sin is death.

For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NIV)

We read in the Holy Scriptures that God's wrath will punish all the ungodliness and wickedness of sinners.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, Romans 1:18 (NIV)

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 2 Peter 3:7 (NIV)

In conclusion, we are all wicked servants who have sinned against our master. Holy Scripture states that all those who have sinned must face the awful judgment of the infinite Justice and eternal Wrath of All-Mighty God.

The Message of all the true Prophets of God

All the true prophets of God believed in the value of substitutionary sacrifice. The first book of the Jewish Old Testament (*Taurat*) shows that the punishment for sin is death. In Genesis, we see Adam and Eve sin willfully and knowingly against an explicit command of God. Their sinful act of rebellion brought death upon the entire human race. There was no way that God could maintain His own Justice and still bless them unless their sins were forgiven. It was then that God covered them with the skin of an animal whose life had to be taken to provide them a covering (Genesis 3:21). God also promised there would appear in human history a person who would be the seed of a woman (a virgin-born child) who would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14).

Next, we read that Abel offered a ceremonially clean animal whose life was taken in sacrifice (Genesis 4:4). No doubt, Abel had heard his parents tell him how they had

sinned and how God had covered them with the skin of a sacrificial animal. He knew that he was a sinner too and that the penalty of sin was death. Therefore, he felt the need to sacrifice the firstborn of his flock to God. The LORD looked with favor upon Abel's sacrificial lamb. Abel knew that the penalty for sin was death and that his good deeds could not appease the justice of God. He recognized that he deserved death, so he sacrificed a lamb as a testimony that he was a sinner who needed a sinless sacrifice to die in his place.

By contrast, Cain offered the good fruits of his own deeds that did not require the shedding of blood to atone for his sins. He was like the Hindus who offer flowers and good fruits to their deities. Throughout world history there have been these two classes of religions: Those who trust their good deeds (Muslims and Hindus) and those who know their sinfulness and recognize their need of a substitutionary sacrifice for sin (the People of the Book).

But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, Genesis 4:4 (NIV)

The Prophet Abraham (*Ibrahim*) built various altars to offer sacrifices to God in the Holy Land of promise. In contrast to Muhammad, Abraham believed in the necessity of substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

1. Shechem (Genesis 12:6-7)
2. East of Bethel (Genesis 12:8)
3. Hebron (Genesis 13:18)
4. Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:9)

The Prophet Moses was given very detailed and extensive revelations from God about various sacrifices and offerings that had to be observed by the people of Israel.

1. Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)
2. Meal Offering (Leviticus 2)
3. Peace Offering (Leviticus 3)
4. Sin Offering (Leviticus 4)
5. Trespass Offering (Leviticus 5)
6. Day of Atonement Offerings (Leviticus 16 and 23:27-32)
7. The daily evening and morning sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-42)

A sacrificial animal had to be ceremonially clean, such as a sheep, goat, or cow. It could not be an unclean animal like a pig or a camel. God's sacrifice must be ceremonially pure to be a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. Even though the Prophet Abraham had camels (Genesis 24:64), he would never have sacrificed such an unclean animal to God. There is no sacred difference between a swine and a camel, because they were both unclean animals that could never be used for sacrifice. Yet, in contrast to Abraham and Moses, Muhammad dared to sacrifice **camels** to God, as if God would be pleased with an impure sacrifice!

However, of those that chew the cud or that have a split hoof completely divided you may not eat the **camel**, the rabbit or the coney. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a split hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you.

The **pig** is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. Deuteronomy 14:7-8 (NIV)

We could discuss the many holy sacrifices that were offered to God by Job, Noah, Jacob, Gideon, Samuel, King David, King Solomon, etc. However, we will leave this endeavor for another time. We only wish to show that the divine Prophets of Holy Scripture believed in the merit of substitutionary sacrifice. *Tragically, Muhammad and those who follow his teachings reject the most vital message of all the divine Prophets of God.*

It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His Guidance to you and proclaim the good news to all who do right. Al-Hajj 22:37 Yusufali's translation

Of course, meat and blood do not reach to God in a crude and literal sense, as if God were hungry for meat and thirsty for blood. For that matter, neither do creeds, prayers, pilgrimages, fastings, nor alms reach to God. In the literal sense, they are all worthless and empty religious rituals. Muhammad did not understand the symbolic significance of animal sacrifice. These sacrificial offerings were meant to teach us that the penalty for sin is death. Only through the death of another is forgiveness of our sins and guilt possible. It was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ die upon the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. If we reject the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, we reject the gift of God's love and the divine means to our eternal salvation.

As a side note, it was no wonder that the Jews of Arabia rejected Muhammad and his claims to be a prophet when they saw him sacrifice **unclean camels** to God.

"Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean— whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground— even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. Leviticus 5:2 (NIV)

We must not close this discussion of the Message of the true prophets of God without mentioning the prophet Isaiah. In his divinely inspired writings, he described the coming of the Messiah into this world in the following words.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

And, more importantly, he foretold that this Messiah would die sacrificially, like a lamb, while bearing the sins and iniquities of us all. Our hearts bow in thankful adoration and

holy wonder as we contemplate the humiliation, suffering, and death of the blest and divine Lamb of God who died sacrificially for sinful humanity.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:5-12 (NIV)

Thus, the Old Testament scriptures anticipated the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. These ancient scriptures present an elaborate system of animal sacrifices that showed the seriousness of sin and the necessity of substitutionary sacrifice. They showed there was a coming Savior who would be divine, virgin-born, and sinless. They foretold that this Savior would be the Lamb of God who would die sacrificially for sinners and be the true reality that would give meaning and significance to the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Moses and all the rest of the prophets of Holy Scripture.

Primary Purpose

Now the primary purpose of the divine Son coming into human history was to provide the means whereby salvation may be offered to sinners. This does not mean there were not other wide and glorious purposes too. But, the primary purpose was the redemption of sinners. All the writers of the New Testament link salvation with the blessed person of the Messiah.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because **he will save his people from their sins.**" Matthew 1:21 (NIV)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom for many.**" Mark 10:45 (NIV)

For the Son of Man came to seek and **to save what was lost.**" Luke 19:10 (NIV)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:16-18 (NIV)

... I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and **gave himself for me.** Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**— of whom I am the worst. 1 Tim 1:15 (NIV)

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he **had provided purification for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Hebrew 1:2-3 (NIV)

Because Islam rejects the vital doctrine of the deity of Christ, it must reject Christ's substitutionary death upon Calvary's cross too. Like Cain and the pagans, they are left with the sacrifices of their own good works. Their rejection conflicts with **the most important message of all the ancient Holy Prophets, namely, that death was the penalty for sin and that a substitutionary sacrifice was necessary to atone for one's sins.**

Infinite Justice

On the one side is God who never compromises His infinite Justice and Holiness, and on the other side are sinners who have done wickedly and deserve the wrath of God. There is no sinless human being who can step forward to be a mediator between God and humankind. The prophets cannot intercede and remove the evil deeds of sinners, because they are sinners too. The prophets need to have their sins removed as much as anyone else. If this were the end of the matter, the situation for sinners would be utterly hopeless, and they would necessarily face the eternal wrath of All-Mighty God because of their sins and transgressions.

Image & Likeness of God

In contrast to the brute animals, Holy Scripture states that human beings were created in the *image* (tselem בצלמנו) and *likeness* (demuwth כדמותנו) of God. This is an important point to observe because these uniquely human features make it possible for the Second Person of the Trinity to take a truly human nature.

Then God said, "Let us make man in **our image**, in **our likeness**, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in his own image, in **the image of God** he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in **the image of God** has God made man. Genesis 9:6 (NIV)

and to put on the new self, **created to be like God** in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24 (NIV)

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the **image of its Creator**. Colossians 3:10 (NIV)

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in **God's likeness**. James 3:9 (NIV)

None of the other animals that God spoke into being was created in the *image* and *likeness* of God. Of course, animals have hearts, teeth, skin, eyes, ears, etc., so the image and likeness of God does not consist in these physical properties. The distinctive feature of human beings is that they possess an immaterial, rational mind or intellect. It is this feature that bears the image of the All-Mighty. God is a spiritual being who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom. Human beings are creatures who possess knowledge and wisdom finitely. St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) wrote in his work entitled, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, the following.

The pre-eminence of man consists in this, that God made him to His own image by giving him an intellect by which he surpasses the beasts....
... what is the basis of man's greater dignity except that he was created in the image of God? This was not, however, in his body but in his intellect, ...⁶

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274 A.D.) agreed with the teachings of St. Augustine and taught that the image of God signifies that human beings possess an intellectual nature.

I answer that, Since man is said to be the image of God by reason of his intellectual nature, he is the most perfectly like God according to that in which he can best imitate God in his intellectual nature.⁷

The famous Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 A.D.), in his book, *The Guide For the Perplexed* (original in Arabic, *Dalalat alHa'irin*; translated into Hebrew, *Moreh Nebuchim*), discussed the meaning and significance of the Hebrew words, *tselem* and *demuwth*. In his philosophic work, Maimonides stated that the image and likeness of God relate to the fact that human beings have a *finite intellectual mind*, while the Almighty has an *infinite intellectual mind*. The finite and infinite cannot be identical in truth, yet, the spiritual and intellectual nature of the human mind bears a correspondence to the spiritual and intellectual nature of the divine mind. In addition, Maimonides stated explicitly that the expressions the image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demuwth*) of God only refer to the intellectual nature of the divine and human mind. They don't imply that the Supreme Being possesses a material body like human beings do.

As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, *viz.*, intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compared—though only apparently, not in truth—to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ. On this account, *i.e.*, on the account of the Divine intellect with which man has been endowed, he is said to have been made in the form and likeness of the Almighty, but far from it be the notion that the Supreme Being is corporeal, having a material form.⁸

Thus, God endows human beings with a spiritual and intellectual mind that no other bodily creature possesses. Furthermore, God is a being who is spiritual and intellectual too. Because the divine mind and the human mind are both intellectual, spiritual, and non-material, Holy Scripture states humans were created in the image and likeness of God. Their difference is the difference between the infinite and the finite. Yet, their minds belong to the same immaterial order of existence, and they both possess an intellectual and spiritual nature.

The concept that humans are superior to brute animals is affirmed in the Qur'an. It states that God breathed into Adam of His Spirit. In his note on Sura Al Hijr 15:29 (No. **1968**)⁹, Yusuf Ali states that Allah breathed into Adam His Spirit and that this imparted to him *a faculty with God-like knowledge and will*. Since Muhammad's creation story was gleaned from the Genesis accounts narrated by the Jews who inhabited the Arabian Peninsula, we should not be surprised to read this Muslim scholar's affirmation that humans have a spiritual and intellectual faculty.

So, when I have made him and have **breathed into him of My Spirit**, do ye fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him." Sura Al Hijr 15:29 (Pickthal's translation)

And when I have fashioned him and **breathed into him of My spirit**, bow before him in homage. Sura Al Hijr 15:29 (Ahmed Ali's translation)

"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and **breathed into him of My spirit**, fall ye down in obeisance unto him." Sura Sad 38:72 (Yusuf Ali's translation)

When I have shaped him, and **breathed My Spirit in him**, fall you down, bowing before him!' Sura Sad 38:72 (Arthur Arberry's translation)

1968. Among other passages where the creation of Adam is referred to *cf.* the following: 2:30-39; 7:11-25. Note that here the emphasis is on three points: (1) the breathing of Allah's Spirit in man, *i.e.*, **the faculty of God-like knowledge and will**, which, if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures; ..." (Yusuf Ali's commentary note) [emphasis added]

Therefore, the Qur'an recognizes the spiritual nature of human beings who are superior to animals, because they possess an intellectual and spiritual soul.

While it appears that Muslims should accept that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God, a cautionary note should be mentioned here. This is because the Qur'an also claims there is nothing like unto God.

There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things). (ash-Shura 42:11)

And there is none like unto Him. al-Ikhlās 112:4

Invent not similitudes for Allah: for Allah knoweth, and ye know not. an-Nahl 16:74 (Yusuf Ali's translation)

Consequently, some Muslims—not all Muslims—state that our human ideas about God bear no correspondence to God's reality because He is so infinitely transcendent beyond our finite human minds.

This position is logically incoherent, because these Muslims claim that the Qur'an gives us true knowledge of God. However, if human language were not capable of expressing the truth of God, then neither can the Qur'an express divine truth, because it must use human language to communicate its truth claims. For example, the Qur'an describes the justice of God, but the human word for justice must correspond to the Qur'an's meaning for justice in order for the Qur'an to be meaningful to us. And, if it does not, then the Qur'an's word for justice is merely an interesting sound, since it bears no relationship to our understanding of justice. As a result, we only know that God's justice is not justice as we understand it. We understand human justice to be equity, fairness, righteousness, and getting one's due. Consequently, if human words do not express a likeness to God, then terms like justice, righteousness, all mighty, Creator, infinite, etc, tell us nothing about the true nature of God. If this view were true, then the God of Islam is very much like the Unknown God of the ancient pagan Greeks (Acts 17:23).

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. Acts 17:23 (NIV)

By contrast, since God is the Creator of the human ear and mouth, can He not communicate true knowledge concerning Himself? The answer is obviously yes. God is not limited, and He has the ability to express truth to us. The prophet Moses was rebuked with these words.

The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." Exodus 4:11-12 (NIV)

Divine Incarnation

Since human nature possesses the image and likeness of the Divine, it is logically possible for the Word to take upon Himself human nature (John 1:1, 14). The person of

the Lord Jesus Christ is from above, divine, infinite, eternal, and immaterial, while His finite material body and human nature were from the Virgin Mary. St. Cyril distinguished between 1) the divine person of the Son who is eternal and did not have a beginning with the virgin and 2) the human body and rational soul whose temporal origin was from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

This expression, however, 'the Word was made flesh' [John 1:14], can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. This the declaration of the correct faith proclaims everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word, being personally united, is said to be born according to the flesh" Cyril of Alexandria, *First Letter to Nestorius*, A.D. 430.

Often, Muslims object and claim, "It is impossible for a finite body to be indwelt by an infinite Being." The term '*finite body*' refers to the spatial dimensions of a material body. So, for the Muslim's objection to stand, the term, '*infinite Being*,' would have to refer to spatial dimensions too. If God were a material Being who is extended infinitely in all directions, then all the universe would have to be God. In this case, the Muslim himself, as well as every other being in the universe, would be God. In other words, the God of Islam would be identical with the universe. The Muslim's line of argumentation is the same rationale that believers in pantheism and New Age philosophy use to argue that everything and everyone is God. It's surprising when we hear Muslims use pantheistic arguments against the possibility of divine incarnation. On the other hand, when a Christian states that God is infinite, he is referring to a non-dimensional infinite, such as, an infinite mind, truth, love, goodness, justice, mercy, etc. In this case, there is no logical inconsistency to claim that a non-dimensional infinite can be present within a finite dimension.

Because human nature was created in the image and likeness of God and because it is a spiritual and immaterial substance, it is assessable and convenient for the divine Word to assume human form. This divine condescension provided the means for the Word to display the infinite love of God in human experience and to become the substitutionary sacrifice for sinners.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

Finite humanness

Since humans are the ones who have sinned, it must be someone who possesses a human nature who pays the penalty for sin. However, a mere human being—even if sinless—

cannot pay the infinite price that God's infinite justice requires. In fact, even if a person were sinless, it would only mean that he would not have to die himself. But, if a person sinned, he would have to die for his own sins. In the Holy scriptures the Mosaic Law states that "each is to die for his own sins" (2 Chronicles 25:4).

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; **each is to die for his own sin.** Deuteronomy 24:16 (NIV)

Perhaps, one might imagine that a sinless person could then bear the judgment for someone else's sins. But, this would not be sufficient for anyone else's sins. Consequently, a single sinless human being would not be able to satisfy God's infinite standard of justice for the entire human race.

So, if redemption were to be made available to every human being, there seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to overcome. First, a person with a human nature must accomplish the means of salvation. But, every human being has proved to be a sinner and not capable of redeeming himself, let alone anyone else. Furthermore, even if a sinless human being were found who was willing to be a substitutionary sacrifice, his finite self-sacrifice could not atone for more than one other person. Thus, it seems that human beings are necessarily lost, doomed, and condemned to hell.

Perhaps, someone might argue there were other beings, such as angels, who could suffer the penalty for the sins of human beings. Such a solution would satisfy the need to punish sin, but it would not be a transaction between the offender and the offended. It is human nature that has fallen and that needs to be elevated again to have fellowship with the divine. Hence, ultimately it needs to be a person who possesses a human nature as well as a person who satisfies the infinite demands of God's righteousness by being divine Himself.

Mediator's dual role

The Mediator must present the invisible God to us in a finite manner as well as represent us before God in an infinite manner. There needs to be a perfect human being whose death would have the ability to atone for the sins of many while satisfying God's infinite justice.

1. Since God is infinite and invisible and we are finite creatures, God must communicate with the human race in a finite manner. The incarnation of the Son perfectly fulfills this requirement, because the infinite Word assumed the finite conditions of human existence. By taking human nature, the Word came into the world and was the perfect display of God's love and mercy in terms that finite human beings can understand and appreciate.
2. God's justice is infinite, so the payment for sin must be infinite too. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the divine Son who possesses a human nature, he could be a human sacrifice for sins with an infinite and divine value.

Hence, we see that the Incarnation of the Word in human flesh bridges the gulf between the transcendence of God and the finiteness of sinful humanity. We see the full expression of the love of God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His substitutionary death that has sufficient value to satisfy the infinite requirements of God's justice.

Conclusion

Since Islam rejects the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, it must reject God's gift of love to the world, His beloved Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—who was sent to be the Savior of the world. Islam has no divine plan of atonement or redemption for guilty sinners.

Our heart's desire is that you will not reject the blest Lamb of God who came into this world to be your Savior. He suffered, bled, and die for you, so you can be redeemed from your sins and be with Him in paradise.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

**Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow.**

Thou are the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son;
God manifest, God seen and heard,
The heaven's beloved One;

In Thee most perfectly expressed,
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead too: the Blest,
Eternally divine.

Image of the Infinite Unseen,
Whose being none can know;
Brightness of light no eye hath seen,
God's love revealed below,

The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature's grasp transcend;
The Father only Thy blest name
Of Son can comprehend.

Yet loving Thee, on whom His love
Ineffable doth rest,
The worshippers, O Lord, above,
As one with Thee, are blest:

Of the vast universe of bliss,
The centre Thou and Sun;
The eternal theme of praise is this,
To heaven's beloved One:

¹ Al-Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Translated by M.M. Khan, Dar AHYA Us-Sunnah, Al Nabawiya, (Arabic & English), Vol. 9 p. 358-359.

² Oh Allah! You are my Lord. None has the right to be worshiped but You. You created me, and I am your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as much as I can. I acknowledge before You , all the blessings You have bestowed upon me and **confess to You all my sins, so please forgive them, as no one can forgive sins except You.** And I seek refuge in You from all the evil I have done.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8 p. 226.

⁴ Muslim, Imam, *Sahih Muslim: Being Traditions of the Sayings and Doings of the Prophet Muhammad as Narrated by His Companions* and compiled under the Title Al-Jami'-Us-Sahih, Translated by 'Abdul H. Siddiqi, vol. 1, p. 290.

⁵ Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Translated by A. Guillaume, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, (Re-issued in Karachi, Pakistan, 1967, 13th impression, 1998) 1955, pp.815.

⁶ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis (De Genesi ad Litteram)*, Volume 1 Books 1-6, Translated by J. H. Taylor, S.J., Paulist Press, New York, NY, 1955, (book 6, chapter 12, section 21-22) p. 193.

⁷ Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, Reprinted 1981, Part 1, Question 93, Article 4, p. 471.

⁸ Maimonides, Moses, *The Guide For The Perplexed*, translated by M. Friedlander, Dover Publications, New York, NY, p. 14.

⁹ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc, Elmhurst, New York, U.S. Edition 1987, p. 643.